

# Legislature

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"it's almost impossible for the state to end up as the payer of last resort" because it would give taxpayers an incentive to defeat levies, he said.

Additionally, "You run up against the constitutional question of denying people the ability to govern themselves," he said.

Goldschmidt is "in the process" of reviewing the proposals but may "present one of his own," Kantor said.

Faculty salary increases will be the top priority of higher education, said Chancellor William Davis of the Oregon State System of Higher Education. "Oregon, long at the back of the salary pack, is struggling just to stay even," Davis said.

"Top-flight professors not only attract research dollars to their states, which economists tell us turn over several times more in every sector of the economy, but these people also attract companies that want to be near the brainpower and the research of scholars and researchers who can help them develop and sell successful products," he said.

A bill already has been drafted in an attempt to solve the problem of inaccessible and expensive liability insurance and should be "streamlined" as the first order of business in the Judiciary Committee, Frye said.

"There's more heat than light coming out of this issue," Frye said. "There's going to be plenty of controversy generated out of this legislation."

The final bill will be short on tort reform, and as a result will probably anger the insurance industry. "That's an insurance industry euphemism for chang-

ing the civil justice system," which is both unnecessary and unproductive, Frye said.

Instead, the legislation will institute changes in the state insurance code. As an example, current state law prohibits "groups of people in like circumstances" from getting group liability insurance, Frye said.

"We're recommending that that obstruction be lifted," Frye said. If passed, the legislation would enable groups of business people such as tavern owners and child-care center owners to get group rates, two industries that have had the most trouble obtaining liability insurance.

Despite expected opposition, "my hope is that we can put something together that's basically agreeable so that when we finally send it out on the floor there will be a consensus," Frye said.

The Judiciary Committee, which traditionally receives the largest number of bills, also may handle legislation this session concerning the civil commitment of mentally ill people, drug-testing of state employees and victims' rights, Frye said.

Ballot Measure 10, the victims' rights initiative voters passed in November, contains "some real serious constitutional and procedural problems," Frye said. Eugene defense attorney Tom Fagan already has filed a motion in Lane County Circuit Court attacking the constitutionality of a provision that prohibits defendants from obtaining the identity and residence of victims.

While Frye would prefer the issue to be settled through the

courts. "If somebody wants to introduce a bill to clean up some of the mess" it will come through his committee, he said.

Comparable worth, termed "pay equity" by the Goldschmidt administration, should sail through both labor committees and be one of the first substantive pieces of legislation signed into law. A comparable worth bill passed both houses last session, and Goldschmidt supports the concept.

Mandatory seat-belt use will pit civil libertarians against law enforcement officials who claim lives and money can be saved as well as money-conscious citizens who maintain that accidents raise everybody's insurance premiums.

Tired of being garbage collectors, Oregon grocers have vowed to mount an attack on the state's sacred bottle bill. While legislators may be willing to experiment with alternative and centralized deposit locations, few will be willing to jeopardize the nation's most successful anti-litter law.

Legislators ought to "find some ways that we can be more creative," said Rep. Ron Eachus. At the same time, most will subscribe to his view that "the goal ought to be to facilitate the return of bottles."

The most vicious political battle may be determining whether and how to reconnect the state and federal tax codes. Goldschmidt made a campaign promise to eliminate any "windfall" by reconnecting, but several state agencies will recognize the opportunity to expand their wish lists.

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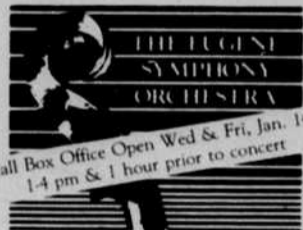
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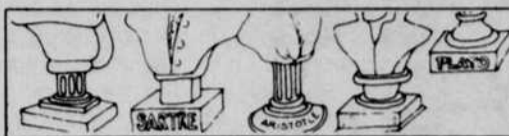
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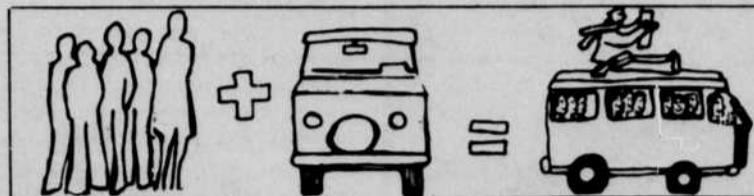
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